



A TRUE DESCRIPTI- ON OV T OF THE

WVORDE OF GOD, OF
THE VISIBLE
CHVRCH,

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A TRVE DESCRIP-

TION OVT OF THE VVORDE

of God, of the visible Church.



There is but (a) one God and Father of all, one Lorde over all, and one Spirit : So is there but (b) one Trueth, one Faith, one Sa^uuation, one Church, called in one hope, ioyned in one profession, guided by one (c) rule euen the Worde of the most high.

This Church as it is vnuerfallie vnderstood, conteyneth in it all the (d) Elect of God that haue bin, are, or shalbe : But being considered more particularlie, as it is seene in this present world, It consisteth of a companie and fellowship of (e) faithfull and (f) holie people gathered in the name of Christ Iesus their only (g) King, (h) Priest, and (i) Prophet, (k) worshipping him aright, being (l) peaceable and quietlie governed by his Officers and lawes, (m) keeping the vnitie of faith in the bonde of peace & n loue vnfaigned, Most ioyfull, excellent and glorious things are euerie where in the Scriptures spoken of this Church, It is called the (p) Citie, (q) House (r) Temple, and s mountaine of the eternal God: the chosen generation, s the holie nation, the peculiar people, the (v) Vineyarde, the x garden enclosed, the spring shut op, the sealed fountaine, the orchichyard of Pomgranades with sweete frutes, the heritage, the kingdom of Christ : yea his s sister, his loue, his spouse, his Queene, & his bodie, the ioye of the whole earth To this societie is the d covenant and all the promises made

a Genes 1. 1. Exo. 10. 3,
b1. Tim. 2. 4. Phil. 2. 15.
Ephe 2. 18. Iohn 2. 4.
c Deut. 6. 15. Rom 10. 8,
2. Tim. 3. 15 Iohn 8. 51
1. Iohn 2. 3. 4. &c.
d Gen. 17. 1. Pet. 1. 2. Re-
vela. 7. 9. 1. Cor. 10. 1
Iohn. 17. 20.
e Psal. 111. 1. & 149. 1.
1 sai. 2. 12. Ephe. 1. 1,
1. Cor. 1. 2. Deut. 14. 2.
f Deut. 12. 5. Iohn. 6. 37 &
3. 14. & 18. 38. Luke
17. 1.
g Gen 44. 10. Psal. 45. 6.
Zacha. 9. 9. Heb. 1. 8.
h Rom 8. 34. Iohn. 17.
Heb. 5. 9. & 8. 1. & 4. 14
Deut 18. 15. Mat. 17. 15
Hebr 1. 1. Gen 14. 18.
k Exo. 20. 7. 8. Lewis 10. 5
Iohn 4. 23.
l Mat 11. 29. 1. Cor. 11. 16
Mar. 13. 24. Reue 12. 8.
m Ephe 4. 3. 1. Cor. 1. 13
Mar. 9. 50.
n Iohn 13. 34. 1. Cor. 13. 4
1. Pet. 1. 12. 1. Ioh 3. 18.
o p Psal. 87. 2.
q 1. Tim. 3. 15. Heb 3. 6
r 1. Cor. 3. 17.
s 1 saiah 2. 2. Micha. 4. 2
Zach 8. 3. 1. Pet 2. 9.
v 1 saiah 51. & 27. 11.
x. Cant 4. 12. 1 sa. 51. 1.
y 1 saiah 9. 25.
z Micha 3. 2. Iohn 3. 5.
a Cant 5. 2.
b Psal. 45. 9.
c 1. Cor. 12. 27. Ephe. 1. 23
d Gal. 4. 28.

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of *(e)* peace, of loue and of *(f)* saluation, of
(g) presens of God, of his graces, of his po-
 wer, and of his *(h)* protection: And surelie if
 this Church be considered in her partes, it shal
 appeare most beautifull, yea most wonder-
 full, and even *(i)* rauishing the senses to con-
 ceauie, much more to beholde, what then
 to enioy so blessed a communion. For behold

her *(k)* King and Lord is the King of peace, &
 Lorde him selfe of all glorie. Shee enioyeth

most hclie and heauenlie *(l)* lawes, most faith-
 full and vigilant *(m)* Pastours, most syncere &
 pure *(n)* Teachers, most careful and vpright

(o) Governours, most diligent and *(p)* trustie
 Deacons, most louinge and sober *q* Relieuers,

and a most humble, meeke, obedient, faith-
 full and loving people, everie stone livinge,

elect and precious, everie stone hath his beau-
 tie, his burden and his order. All bound to

(x) edifie one another, exhort, reprove & co-
 fort one another, louinglie as to their owne

members, & faithfullie as in the eyes of God.

No *a* Office here is ambitiouslie affected, no

(b) lawe wrongfullie wrested or *(c)* wilfully neg-
 lected, no *d* trueth hid or perverted, e everie

one here hath fredome and power (not
 disturbing the peaceable order of the Church)

to utter his complaints and griefes, and freely
 to reprove the transgressions and errors of

anie without exceptions of persons.

Here is no intrusion or clipping vp an o-
 ther way into the sheepefolde, then *g* by the

holy & free election of the Lordes holic and
 free people, and that according to the Lordes

Ordinance, humbling them selves by fastinge
 and prayer before the Lorde, crauing the direc-
 tion of his holy Spirit, for the triall and appro-
 ving of his Giftes, &c.

Thus

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Thus they orderlie proceede to ordination by fasting and prayer, in which *(b)* action the Apostles vsed laying on of handes. Thus hath euerie one of the people interest in the election and ordination of their officers, as also in the administration of their offices vpon *(i)* transgression, offence, abuse, &c. hauing an especiall care vnto the inuiolable order of the Church, as is aforesaid.

Likewise in this Church they haue holy *(k)* lawes, as limits & bondes; which, it is lawfull at no hande to transgresse. They haue lawes to direct them in the choise of euerie officer, what kinde of men the Lorde will haue.

Their Pastour must be apte to *(l)* teach, no vong Scholler, *(m)* able to diuide the worde aright, & holding faste that faithful worde, according to doctrine, that he may be able also to exhorthe, rebuke, improoue, with whole some doctrine, & to conuince them that saie against it:

He must be a man that loueth goodnes: he must be wise, righteous, holie. temperate: hee must be of life *(n)* onreprouable, as Gods Steward: hee must be generatie well reported of, & one that ruleth his owne houlholde vnder obedience with al honestie: he must be modest, humble, meeke, gentle, & louing: hee must be a man of great *(p)* patience, compasſion, labour and diligence: hee must alwaies be carefull and watchfull over the flocke where of the Lorde hath made him overseer with al willingnes & chearefulnes, not holding his office in respect of persons, but doing his duetie to euerie soule, as he will answer before the chief Shepheard, &c.

Their Doctor or Teacher must be a man apt to teach, able to diuide the worde of God aright, and to deliuer sound and wholeſome doctrine from the same, still building vpon that sounde groundworke, he must be mighty in the Scriptures, able to conuince the gainsayers, & carefullie to deliuer his doctrine pure, sound & plaine, not with curiositie or affection, but so that it may edifie the most simple, approuing it to euerie mans conscience, he must be of life vnreprouable, one that can governe his owne houlholde, he must be of manners sober, temperate, modest, gentle and louing, &c.

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Numb. 11. 24
2. Chro 19. 8
Actes 15.
1. Tim. 5
 Their Elders must be of wisdom and iudgement, endued with the Spirit of God, able to discern betweene cause and cause, betweene plea and plea, and accordinglie to preuent and redres euilles, alwayes vigilant and intending to see the statutes, ordinances and lawes of God kept in the Church; and that not onelie by the people in obedience, but to see the officers doe their duties. These men must bee of life likewise vnaproueable, governing their owne families orderlie, they must be also of maners sober, gentle, modest, louing, temperate, etc.

Actes. 6. 3.
1. Tim. 3. 8. 9
 Their Deacons must be men of honest report, hauing the misterie of the faith in a pure conscience, endued with the holy ghost: they must be graue, temperate, not giue to excess, nor to filthie lucre.

1. Tim 5. 9.
10.
 Their Relieuers or Widowes must be women of 60, yeares of age at the least, for auoydinge of inconueniencies: they must be well reported of for good workes, such as haue nourished their children, such as haue bin harberous to straungers: diligent and seruiceable to the Saintes, compassionate and helpful to them in aduersitie, giue to euerie good worke, continuing in supplications and prayers night and daye.

These Officers must firste be duellie proued, then if

1. Tim. 3. 10
 they be founde blameles, administer, etc.

Nowe as the persons, giftes, conditions, manners, life and prooffe of these officers, is set downe by the holie Gnosle: So are their offices limited, seuered, and diuers:

Leuit. 10. 10
11.
Num. 12. 7.
Ezek 44. 23.
and 44. 33.
Psal. 23.
John 21. 15.
 The Pastours office is, to feede the sheep of Christ in greene and wholesome pastures of his worde, and leade them to the still waters, euen to the pure fountaine and riuer of life. Hee must guyde and keepe those sheepe by that heauenlie sheephooke and pastorall staffe of the worde, thereby drawing them to him, thereby lookinge into their soules, euen into their most secrete thoughts: Thereby discerning their diseases, and thereby curinge them: applying to euery disease a fit and conuenient medicine.

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dicine, according to the qualitie and danger of the disease, and giue warning to the Church, that they may orderlie proceede to excommunication. Further, he must by this his sheepehook watch over and defend his flock from rauinous beastes and the Wolfe, and take the little foxes, etc.

The Doctours office is already sett downe in his description: His speciall care must bee, to builde vppon the onely true grounde- worke, golde, silver, and pretious stones, that his worke may endure the triall of the fire, and by the light of the same fire, reueale the Tymber, Hay, and Stubble of false Teachers: hee must take diligent heede to keepe the Church from errors. And further hee must deliuer his doctrine so playnlie, simplie, and purelie, that the church may increasē with the increasing of God; & growe vp vnto him which is the head Christ Iesus.

The office of the Auncientes is expressed in their description: Their especiall care must bee, to see the ordinances of God truely taught and practized, aswell by the officers in dooing their duetie vprightlie, as to see that the people obey willingly and redilie. It is their due tie to see the Congregation holilie and quietlie ordered, and no way disturbed, by the contentious and disobedient, frowarde and obstinate: not taking away the libertie of the least, but vpholding the right of all, wiselie iudging of times and circumstances: They must bee readie assistants to the Pastours and Teachers, helping to beare their burden, but not intruding into their office.

The Deacons office is, faithfullie to gather, and collect by the ordinance of the Church, the goodes and beneuolence of the faithfull, and by the same direction, diligētie and trustilie to distribute them according to the necessitie of the Saintes. Further they must enquire and consider of the proportion of the wantes both of the Officers and other poore, and accordinglie relate vnto the Church that provision may be made.

The Relieuers & Widowes office is, to minister to the sicke, lame, wearie, & diseased, such helpfull comforts

*Math. 23.
1. Pet. 5. 1.
Zach. 4. 11. 7
Reuel. 12. 3.
Luk. 12. 42.
2. Cor. 10. 4. 5
Heb. 8. 12.*

*Ezech. 33. 1.
1. Cor. 11. 19
Ioh. 10. 11. 12
Leuit. 10. 10
Ezech. 44. 24.
Mal. 2. 6.
2. Cor. 3. 11
1. Cor. 1. 7.
1. Tim. 4. 16
and 2. 10.
Eph. 2. 20.
Heb. 6. 1.*

*Numb. 11. 16
Deut. 16. 18
2. Chro. 19. 8
Exod. 39. 43
1. Tim. 3. 15
2. Tim. 1. 13
1. Cor. 11. 16
and 14. 33.
Gal. 2. 5. 5.
Colos. 1. 16.
Math. 20.
1. Pet. 5. 1.
Rom. 12. 8.*

Math. 6.

Rom. 12. 8.

1. Tim. 5. 9.

Rom. 12. 3

as they neede, by watching, tending and helping them. Further, they must shewe good example to the yonger Women, in sober, modest, & godlie conuersation, avoyding idlenes, vaine talke, & light behauiour.

Luke. 9. 46.

Iohn. 13. 13.

3. Cor. 12. 12

125. 8.

Ephe. 4. 11.

11. 13. 16.

These Officers, though they be diuers and seuerall, yet are they not seuered, least their should be a diuision in the bodie; but they are as members of the bodie, hauing the same care one of another, ioyntlie doing their seuerall dueties to the seruice of the Sainctes, and to the edification of the Bodie of Christ, till we all meete together in the perfect measure of the fullnes of Christe, by whom all the bodie being in the meane while thus coupled and knif together by everie ioynt for the furniture thereof, according to the effectuall power which is in the measure of everie parte, receyueh increase of the bodie, vnto the edifying of it self in loue: neyther can any of these Offices be wanting, without grievous lamenies, & apparant deformitie of the bodie, yea violent iniurie to the Head Christ Iesusi.

Rom. 12.

1. Cor. 12.

Reuel. 14. 1. 2

Reuel. 12. 11.

Can. 6. 3.

Thus this holie armie of sainctes, is marshalled here in earth by these Officers, vnder the conduct of their glorious Emperour CHRIST, that victorious Michael, Thus it marcheth in this most heauenlie order, & gracious araye, against all Enimies both bodelie and ghostlie. Peaceable in it self as Ierusalem, terrible vnto them as an Armie with banners, triumphing over their tyrannie with patience, their crueltie with meekenes, and over Death it self withodyng. Thus through the blood of that spotles Lambe, and that Worde of their testimonie, they are more then Conquerours, brusing the Head of the Serpent: yea through the power of his Worde, they haue power to cast downe Sathan like lightning: to treade vpon Serpents and Scorpions: to cast downe strong holds, and everie thing that exalteth it self against God. The Gates of Hell and all the Principalities and powers of the worlde, shall not prevaile against it.

Rom. 8. 38, 39.

Luke 10. 18.

19.

Mat. 16. 18.

Rom 1. 83. 19

Mat. 16. 19.

Further, hee hath giuen them the Keyes of the Kingdome of Heauen, That whatsoever they binde

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in earth by his worde, shalbe bounde in heaven : and whatsoeuer they looke on earth, shalbe loosed in heaven. Iohn. 10. 29.
Mat. 18. 18.

Nowe this power which Christ hath given vnto his Church, and to euerie member of his Church, to keepe it in order, hee hath not lefte it to their discretions and lusts to be vsed or neglected as they will, but in his last Will and Testament, he hath sett downe both an order of proceeding, and an end to which it is vsed. Iohn. 10. 23.
Mat. 16. 16.
and 18. 18.
Deut. 19. 3. 2
Reuel. 12. 18.

If the fault bee priuate, private holy & loving admonition & reproofe is to be vsed, with an inwarde desire & earnest care to winne their brother : But if hee wil not heare, yet to take two or three other brethre with him, whom he knoweth most meete for that purpose, that by the mouth of two or thre witnesses, euerie word may be confirmed: And if he refuse to heare them, then to declare the matter to the Church, which ought seuerely and sharpelie to reprehende, grauelie to admonishe, and louinglie to perswade the partie offending: shewing him the heynousnes of his offence, and the daunger of his obstinacie, and the fearefull judgements of the Lorde. Leuit. 19. 17.
18.
Mat. 18. 15.
Deut. 19. 15
Mat. 18. 16.

All this notwithstanding the Church is not to holde him as an enimie, but to admonishe him and praye for him as a Brother, proouinge if at anie time the Lorde will giue him repentaunce. For this power is not given them to the destruction of anie, but to the edification and preseruacion of all. 1. Thess. 3. 15.
1. Cor. 10. 9.
and 1. 10.

If this preuaile not to drawe him to repentance, Then are they in the Name and power of the Lorde Iesus, with the whole Congregationn, reuerentlie in prayer to proceede to excommunication, casting him out of the couenaunt and protection of the Lorde, for his disobedience and obstinacie, and committing him to Sathan for the destruction of the fleshe, that the Spirit may bee saued in the day of the Lorde Iesus, if such bee his good wil and pleasure. Mat. 18. 16,
1. Cor. 5. 5.

Further, they are to warne the whole Congregation and all other Faithfull, to holde him as a Heathen and

B,

a Pub-

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a Publicane, and to abstaine them selues from his societie as not to eate or drinke with him, &c. vnles it bee such as of necessitie must needs, as his Wife, his Children and Familie: yet these (if they be Members of the Church) are not to joyne to him in anie Spirituall exercise.

1. Tim. 5. 10. If the Offence bee publike, the partie is pub-
Gal. 2. 14. lique: to bee reprobud, and admonished: if hee
2. Cor. 7. 9. then repent not, to proceede to excommunication,
vi supra.

The repentance of the partie must bee proportion-
Leuit. 19. 18. able to the Offence, viz. If the Offence bee pub-
Pro. 6. 11. lique publike: If priuate, priuate: humbled, sub-
Rom. 12. 19. missiue; sorrowfull vnfaigned, giving glorie to the
and 14. 1. Lord.

Gal. 6. 1. 2. Mark 9. 50, Ephr. 4. 29, Mat. 18. 14. Lam. 9. 15. 19. 10.

There must great care be had of Admonitions: that they bee not captious, or curious finding faulte where none is. Neyther yet in bitternes or reproche, for that were to destroue and not to saue our brother: but they must bee carefullie done, with prayer going before, they must bee seasoned with trueth, grauitie, love & peace.

Moreover in this Church is an especiall care had by euerie Member thereof, of Offences: The Stronge ought not to offend the Weake, nor the weake to iudge the Stronge: but all graces here are given to the ser-vice and edification of each other in loue and longe sufferinge.

In this Church is the Trueth purelie taught, and surelie kept: heere is the Couenaunte, the Sacramentes, and promisses; the graces, the glorie, the presence, the worships of God, &c.
Gen. 17.
Isay. 44. 3.
Gal. 4. 28.
and 6. 10.
Isay. 60. 15.
Deut. 4. 13
Isay. 56. 7. 1. Tim. 3. 15. Isay. 52. 1.

Into this Temple entreth no vncleane thinge, nei-
ther what so ever worketh Abominations or lyes, but they which are written in the Lambes Booke of life.
Exek. 44. 9.
Isay. 35. 8.
Zach. 14. 21.
Reuel. 21. 27.

OF THE VISIBLE CHVRCH,

But without this CHVRCH shalbee dogges and En. Rom. 2. 9.
shaunters, & Whoremongers, & Murderers, and Idola- Revel. 22. 15.
tours and who so euer loueth & maketh lyes,

FINIS.



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